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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Students Organize Environmental Forum

Summary: Morris students cosponsored a forum with arctic explorer Will Steger and Fresh Energy's J. Drake Hamilton.

(October 10, 2013)-Students in the University of Minnesota, Morris's Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG) chapter recently co-sponsored a public forum with arctic explorer Will Steger and Fresh Energy's J. Drake Hamilton. Hosted by Clean Up the River Environment (CURE), the forum included presentations from Steger and Hamilton as well as CURE Senior Director Duane Ninneman and Granite Falls Lutheran Pastor Steve Carmany.

Tim Sheehan '16, Edina, is one of the students who helped orchestrate the event. This was not his first MPIRG event, however, as Sheehan has a history of service to the organization. He first learned about it as a high-school student, when he worked with MPIRG at the state level. He currently serves as an environmental justice task force leader for the Morris chapter.

According to Sheehan, Morris's MPIRG students were responsible for event advertising and publicity, in addition to ensuring the forum went smoothly. They also helped facilitate the question-and-answer portion of the program. Perhaps most importantly, they encouraged their peers to attend the event.

"It is important for students to be smart about the issues," says Sheehan. "When experts give talks about climate science or policy, it is an excellent opportunity for us to learn where the environmental movement is and what we should be doing [to help]."

Sheehan believes that he and other students should not only participate in these sorts of events, but also model advocacy in their communities. He adds that by doing so, they can help create meaningful and effective partnerships.

"It is important that the community sees us being active participants," he says. "Bridging the gap between communities and universities in rural Minnesota will grow a powerful coalition as we move our state toward a clean energy future."

Sheehan's MPIRG work dovetails with his responsibilities as a National Wildlife Federation Campus Ecology Fellowship recipient. As such, he is working with students and community groups to raise the renewable energy standard for Minnesota. Sheehan is also building connections among student leadership networks across Minnesota.

MPIRG is a state-wide, student-directed, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works on social and environmental justice issues. Through work on these issues, the organization hopes to create experienced organizers and active citizens. Additional information is available [online](#).

Pictured: One of Morris's two on-site wind turbine, as seen from the new Green Prairie Community: both are visual examples of the campus's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.